

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 TRSE-00 /061 W

-----128566 092157Z /75

P 092058Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5133

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

USSOUTHCOM

AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH

AMCONSUL CALI POUCH

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, MILL, EEWT

SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. CONGRESS IS READYING A FINAL VERSION OF LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY; THE BILL, WHICH HAS NOW BEEN PASSED (IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERING VERSIONS) BY BOTH HOUSES, MAY BE SENT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR FINAL ACTION AS EARLY AS NEXT WEEK. LIBERAL PRE-CANDIDATE HERNANDO AGUDELO ANNOUNCED HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE. ANOTHER LIBERAL PRE-CANDIDATE, JULIO CESAR TURBAY, LOST SOME LABOR SUPPORT BUT STILL APPEARS TO BE THE FRONT-RUNNER FOR THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. THE CONTROVERSY PROVOKED BY THE FORCED RETIREMENT OF GENERAL MATALLANA APPEARS LIKELY TO SUBSIDE WITHOUT CAUSING ANY LASTING DISSENSION IN THE COLOMBIAN ARMY. THE COLOMBIAN AIRLINE SAM HAS INITIATED REGULAR CHARTER FLIGHTS TO CUBA. END SUMMARY.

2. CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY LEGISLATION RETURNED TO SENATE. THE  
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LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, PASSED LAST WEEK BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WAS RETURNED TO THE SENATE THIS WEEK FOR APPROVAL OF THE CHANGES MADE IN THE HOUSE VERSION OF THE BILL. THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND SENATE VERSIONS WAS THE HOUSE DECISION TO DROP THE ARTICLE PROHIBITING FORMER PRESIDENTS FROM SEEKING RE-ELECTION AT ANY TIME AFTER THEIR TERM OF OFFICE WAS COMPLETED. THE SENATE IS EXPECTED TO AGREE TO

THIS CHANGE, AND THE LEGISLATION WILL PROBABLY BE SENT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR FINAL ACTION LATER NEXT WEEK.

3. LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WITHDRAWS FROM RACE. FORMER CABINET MINISTER HERNANDO AGUDELO VILLA ANNOUNCED HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL RACE AT THE FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION OF HIS LIBERAL FRONT MOVEMENT. AGUDELO, WHO SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY WILL NOT IMMEDIATELY ADHERE TO THE CAMPAIGN OF ANY OTHER LIBERAL CANDIDATE BUT WILL SUPPORT THE PARTY'S EVENTUAL CHOICE, PLANS TO CONTINUE HIS INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT WITH THE INTENTION OF REFORMING THE LIBERAL PARTY. MANY OF AGUDELO'S SUPPORTERS, HOWEVER, ARE THOUGHT TO FAVOR THE CANDIDACY OF CARLOS LLERAS.

4. TURBAY LOSES SOME TRADE UNION SUPPORT. LIBERAL PARTY PRE-CANDIDATE JULIO CESAR TURBAY BECAME A SECONDARY VICTIM THIS WEEK OF THE CTC'S INTERNAL LEADERSHIP BATTLE WHEN THE NEW LEADERS PUBLICLY REPUDIATED THE DECISION OF PREVIOUS CTC LEADERS TO PERSONALLY SUPPORT TURBAY'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY. THE STATED REASONS FOR THIS WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT WERE TURBAY'S ALLEGED FAILURE TO DEVELOP SOCIAL AND LABOR PROGRAMS ACCEPTABLE TO UNIONS, AND HIS STRONG SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS DURING THE SEPTEMBER 14 GENERAL STRIKE. CTC SPOKESMEN INDICATED THAT THE ORGANIZATION HAS NO PLANS TO SUPPORT ANY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IN 1978. MEANWHILE A TOP RANKING OFFICIAL OF THE UTC WITHDREW HIS SUPPORT OF THE TURBAY CANDIDACY FOR ESSENTIALLY THE SAME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REASONS GIVEN BY THE CTC. WHILE THESE RETRACTIONS OF SUPPORT MAY BE RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT IN THEMSELVES, THEY HAVE THE EFFECT OF ADDING TO THE IMPRESSION THAT TURBAY'S APPEAL IS FADING. WE STILL CONSIDER, HOWEVER, THAT TURBAY REMAINS THE FRONT RUNNER IN THE TIGHT RACE FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY NOMINATION.

5. GENERAL'S RETIREMENT SPARKS POLEMICS. THE SHARP CONTROVERSY PROVOKED BY THE FORCED RETIREMENT OF GENERAL MATALLANA IS LIKELY TO SUBSIDE WITHOUT CAUSING SERIOUS OR LASTING DISSENSION IN THE COLOMBIAN ARMY. MATALLANA MAY CONTINUE TO BE HEARD FROM, HOWEVER, AS A GOVERNMENT CRITIC (BOGOTA 11393).

6. INITIATION OF CHARTERED AIRLINE SERVICE TO CUBA. THE COLOMBIAN AIRLINE SAM HAS INITIATED CHARTER SERVICE TO CUBA. THE FIRST FLIGHT LEFT SAN ANDRES ISLAND ON DECEMBER 4, AND TEN MORE ARE SCHEDULED TO FOLLOW DURING DECEMBER, JANUARY, AND FEBRUARY. THE CHARTERS APPEAR TO BE AIMED AT THE TOURIST MARKET, AND WILL INCLUDE AIR TRANSPORTATION, LAND TRANSPORTATION, SIGHTSEEING, HOTEL, AND MEALS. SAM HAS BEEN SEEKING PERMISSION TO ESTABLISH REGULARLY SCHEDULED SERVICE SINCE COLOMBIA AND CUBA RENEWED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009